

Northwestern Counseling and Support Services Inc.

VERMONT DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICE LOCAL SYSTEM OF CARE PLAN 2009 Update

2008 additions made in red

2009 additions made in blue

Part 1 Plan Development

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The following is a list of people and organizations that we contacted to gain information.

- We mailed and handed out over 350 surveys and completed face to face interviews with a variety of stakeholders, family members, staff, guardians, people who receive services, local school personnel, Special Education Coordinators, contracted providers, other social service agencies, area hospitals and physicians, Standing Committee Members and Board Members.
- We held a public forum that included a dinner as a further way of gaining input with over two hundred people in attendance.
- Other resources we used in the planning process were the DDS Quality Service Review, Critical Incident Report Data, Staff surveys, Strategic planning feedback and Consumer and Family Satisfaction Survey results as well as our own consumer surveys that we have completed annually.

Part 2 Priority Needs & Resources

FUNDING

- Funding is needed to maintain a system of supports for people with developmental disabilities that are based on the values articulated in the DD Act of 1996.
- There is a great need for services for individuals before the age of nineteen. Transition services are desired for students who want to graduate from school but are limited to age requirements in applying for Developmental Services. Leslie Bland our Intake Coordinator is working closely with other community organizations to ensure more accurate information about our services is presented concerning transition students. There is a workshop scheduled to educate families about what our role could be in the lives of transitioning students. There are a series of three more trainings scheduled to assist families of transition age youth as well as area special educators.
- At present, services for children are largely limited to personal care funding under the EPSDT program. It would help families to have more flexibility in how they can utilize the funds. The current structure only allows parents to pay an hourly rate not sufficient for high needs children. Also flexibility in using the funds could allow families to purchase other needed services that would ensure their child's success. We have been notified that we have been chosen to be part of a pilot project for the flexible usage of personal care dollars. We were identified because of our work with children with autism. Approximately 40 families will benefit from this pilot.
- Updating the Flexible Family Funding sliding fee schedule and increasing the maximum allocation is needed. The sliding fee scale has not been updated for many years and as a result some families that could benefit from FFF exceed the income requirements. Additionally the maximum allocation has been at \$1122 per year for many years.

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- More funding is necessary for quality of life services. Over time funding has tightened up so much so that funding is only given for those with the most critical needs. The system has eroded to be more of an emergency type service instead of there being a focus on skill building.
- Targeted case management funding allocations have not been increased and most agencies are providing more services than they are funded to provide. This funding source can be used to serve families with children who otherwise would not receive case management services. **We have used targeted case management dollars to aid our families of young children on the autism spectrum. Recently we are about to receive funds to serve children with Developmental Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder through a new Program called "Bridges". The program is meant to provide case management services to families that would otherwise not receive services until their child reached adulthood.**
- More funding is needed to serve parents with disabilities. There is minimal funding available but the supports that are needed are much more intense in order to really make a difference in helping parents and kids with disabilities to stay together over the long term. **We are applying for grants to help begin a program to serve parents with disabilities. The goal would be to have a center where families could receive some intensive services and parent education.**

TRAINING

- More training is necessary for working with people with mental health issues, autism and dementia. Approximately 160 offenders were being served in FY 05 and 17% of the people who received new funding in FY 05 were funded under the priority of "risk to public safety" **We have produced two television programs one on dementia and Developmental Disabilities and one on autism services to help train and educate the community about our work and these disorders.**
- Better training for home providers to be provided at the local and state level.
- Personal Care Attendants continue to need more training. From 1996 to 2001 when funding priorities for children were suspended, the number of children with PDD served by the DS system rose from 30 to 197- a 657% increase.
- More training for self advocates and families. **We want to add more trainings provided by our self advocates. Trainings will be targeted for staff, family members and Shared living providers.** Literature suggests that 40% of people with DD require mental health services.
- We need a continued focus on agency staff training
- There are few dentists and professionals such as therapists, who will see individuals with Medicaid. We need incentives developed so that individuals have their needs met. We also need to further encourage professionals to have training specifically for working with the developmentally disabled. to help **We will begin to establish a listing of medical professionals who are known for going above and beyond to advocate for individuals with Developmental Disability. This list will be made available to all services coordinators families coordinate care for their loved ones.**
- We would like to create mentorships for new individuals applying for services. Our intake coordinator would invite new recipients of service to be visited by the peer support group to give them the opportunity to talk openly about community services that are available and how to get involved in social events and peer support activities.
- A group of Home providers has formed to assist in training new providers and creating a support group for existing providers.

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LEISURE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- The peer support group is a strong support for individuals
- Volunteer program “Project Stride” is a program sponsored by volunteers who would be willing to assist individuals in their homes. The peer support group has already started providing some companionship to individuals who lost services due to the recent budget cuts.
- Education services after high school is very important, developing options and supports so that more people could access college level courses would be great.
- More housing options are needed where independence could be fostered. More individuals could live in apartment settings together. People could be more socially connected that way.
- We have been contacted by Pam Dow who is looking to partner on an independent living skills grant that would assist individuals to learn new skills. The grant would be specifically designed to help recipients transition to living independently.
- We need more organized activities and hangouts in our local communities.
- There continues to be a need for more transportation to and from other communities. It could help individuals who live in rural areas to get connected to activities in different parts of the county.

RESIDENTIAL MODELS

- There is a need for more residential options when the developmental home model doesn't seem to be always appropriate. We are awaiting a presentation from Howard Community Services to explain their new program “Safety Connection” which helps people to be monitored from a distance and live more independently in the community.
- There are other models for people with autism and on the PDD spectrum in other states, we need to look at those programs.
- People with serious mental illness and criminal offending behaviors need a different residential model. We have been working hard developing our offender services and are partnering with corrections in further developing our program. This expansion is put on hold because of recent budget cuts.
- People with the skills to be independent with a small amount of support need to have alternatives besides a developmental home. Supported apartments are needed. As spoken about previously in this document, a local advocate is interested in partnering with us to provide an apartment style, independent living program similar to one that is currently used in Montpelier.

EMPLOYMENT

- Help support a business that employs people with disabilities and without that meets the needs of several individuals. Base the job on level of skill. One idea is to start a business that helps our elderly in the community when they can no longer find teens to do jobs for them that help the elders stay as independent as possible. People with disabilities could fill this need and would also develop some great new friendships. We are looking to partner with the local Home Health Organization to begin this initiative.
- Help promote service industry employment such as lawn care, snow removal, cleaning, cooking, these are ways that people could have their own business. (since not so dependent on funding.)
- People need to work as many hours as possible and should not be limited by caps on job support funding if it is a way for individuals to become more financially independent.

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CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE

- We need to promote independence by increasing opportunities for people to become independent of us. **We look for direction from our large peer support group. The next steps group has members on our Board of Directors and our Standing Committee. We are looking for a volunteer for our funding and training committees.**
- People report to feeling that they have a voice and that their opinions count.
- People need to continue to feel that they have choices and options.
- We need to develop supports in an indirect way. People want their supports to seem invisible to the rest of the community.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

We want to further educate local legislators about our issues and concerns. We want to get them actively involved in our local initiatives by inviting them to get to know us and our clients. **We had good representation when we held Camp Rainbow this past summer. We will continue to invite local legislators to our events.** This past summer we had two local legislators and also the Governor spend time at Camp Rainbow. Several families were able to speak to these legislators and the Governor concerning Developmental Services' issues.

Part 3 OUTCOMES

Priority 1 FUNDING

Current Status

- We remain active by calling legislators to support our initiatives.
- We currently serve both adults and children with targeted case management and continuously audit this service to try to serve more people if others grow independent of the support.
- We use one time dollars wherever possible to address the needs of families who are waiting for flexible family supports. **Currently one time dollars have not been allocated because of the recent budget reductions. This has directly resulted in the denial of one time supports for families in need.**

3Year Status

Legislators will be aware of our concerns

- NCSS will be involved in all transition plans involving graduating students with disabilities.
- Parents with children who receive personal care funding will be aware of their options by us teaching them at time of application.
- Parents with disabilities will be served by a program and area teams such as DCF and local schools will be aware of its existence for referral in to the program.

Action

- We will work with local schools to address the needs of transitioning students. **We are working on a transition team with other local community groups the first training is scheduled in March for families and the community.**
- We will assist families to find appropriate services for children with disabilities of their personal care dollars become flexible. **We begin training on our new pilot project in March to serve families with flexible personal care options.**

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- We will develop a program to better serve parents with disabilities in our community. **Nicole Brisson is leading this initiative to better serve families and parents with disabilities. Nicole currently works with DCF to identify families at risk.**

Measure

- Transitioning students from local schools will be part of a program that makes graduation from high school to our services more effective.
- Children with high needs will use their personal care monies to purchase appropriate services for their disability.
- A program for parents will exist that helps them to keep their children and live in a healthy manner.

PRIORITY 2 TRAINING

Current status

- We currently try to assist families, providers and staff to attend appropriate training for the individual's disability.

3 Year Status

- Additionally trained family members and staff will be available to families to provide skilled homes, respite and personal care services.
- Training for dementia, autism and mental health issues will be on going.
- Offender training for both women and men will be ongoing.
- Agency training program on line will be in its third year.
- Local professionals will have training by our staff in the specific needs of our clients.

Action

- We will provide more training to family members, home providers and contracted workers on topics such as mental illness, dementia, autism and sex offense.
- Staff will be followed on their progress in the on line training program.
- Local professionals will be invited to participate in training specific to our population.

Measure

- After surveying individuals and their families there will be a noted improvement in the number of trained service providers for homes, personal care and respite.
- We will have documentation of training held for our own staff and the community on dementia, autism, DD and Mental illness, and DD sex offenders.
- Local professionals will have attended trainings or we will have brought the training to them on the previous topics.

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Priority 3 LEISURE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Current Status

- We have continued to support the “Next Steps” peer support group to remain active and attend trainings. We currently partner with the ARC and Special Olympics. We currently have a Community Newsletter.

3 Year Status

- Next Steps will be meeting regularly
- Literacy program will serve more students and we will have an option for college level credit.
- People will have an additionally choice for a residential option.
- Community Newsletter will have individuals served on staff.
- Special Olympics and local ARC partnership continued.
- Organized leisure activities across age spans are regular occurrence.
- More individuals will be accessing transportation to other communities.

Action

- Next steps will have assistance where necessary
- We will look for more scholarship opportunities to increase number of people served in our literacy program.
- We will contact Community College to help make transition smoother for individuals with disabilities to attend classes.
- We will advertise and interview for reporter and column writers for Newsletter.
- We will develop a supported apartment choice for individuals who can live in a more independent model other than a DH.
- We will develop a training for more people to use the transportation system across communities.

Measure

- Next Steps will have increased membership and activities
- Literacy program will be serving more participants.
- Several individuals will be attending college level courses.
- Newsletter will have new additions to staff, with columns written by people with disabilities.
- Several people will be living in a supported apartment structure.
- More individuals will be accessing local public transportation.

Priority 4 RESIDENTIAL MODELS

Current Status

- We have currently begun serving several people with dementia in a contracted model that is different than the typical DH model. We have a majority of people living in a DH model and also with their families. Some people live independently with case management services only.

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3 Year Status

- NCSS will have other housing options for individuals
- We will have a supported model specific to people with autism or on the PDD spectrum.
- We will have a model that works for both male and female offenders.
- We will have a supported apartment model for those who can live more independently.

Action

- NCSS will develop several models other than the DH model to serve the different needs of individuals.
- We will develop a supportive model for people on the autism spectrum, specific to the needs of their families or the individual
- Our offender team will develop a model for supported living and group therapy for both male and female offenders.
- We will have a staff assisted living apartment model for semi-independent living.

Measure

- Individuals will be living in several different settings other than just the DH model.
- Families with autism will report to having better supports and more choices.
- Our offender services will be more comprehensive and the program will be well documented.
- Several people will be living in a supported apartment setting.

Priority 5 EMPLOYMENT

Current Status

- We currently support people with disabilities to have competitive employment in the community and promote natural supports as much as possible. Some people have their own businesses. Our current job placements are higher than projected.

3 Year Status

- A business will exist that is managed and employs people with and without disabilities in this community. It will be used as a training site that supports different levels of skills.
- We will help support people to have more jobs in the service industry to hopefully be less dependent on funding for support.
- People will be working more hours and more people will be working.

Action

- Local business will be supported as a way to train and employ people with and without disabilities. We will meet with Home Health to develop a business that meets the needs of the local elder population.
- We will assist more individuals to enter their own business in the service industry.
- People with a goal to work will have an active plan with the employment team to find a job.

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Measure

- Several people will have jobs at local business and people will have a way of training on the job at this business. We will survey Home Health to ensure we are meeting the needs of elders who qualify in the area.
- Several more people will be self-employed in the service industry.
- We will have met our employment goals and will hopefully exceed them.

Priority 6 CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE

Current Status

- We currently help support the Peer Support “Next Steps” Group. We help some people to make connections with friends in the community. We currently give financial assistance for self advocates to attend the State and National Conference each year.

3 Year Status

- We will help additional people to become independent of our support
- Our clients will continue to feel that they have choices in their services and that they have a voice locally and at State gatherings.
- More supports will appear invisible to the community when staff are assisting people.

Action

- We will continue to help people to be as independent as possible from our supports by meeting goals in their ISA’s and promoting graduation celebrations.
- We will pay close attention to our annual surveys specifically for client choices and director will meet with Next Steps group for an ongoing dialogue about client choice and voice.
- Direct Service planning team will be charged with this initiative to make supports more invisible. Annual award to be given to staff that reach this goal.

Measure

- Outcomes will show more people graduating from services.
- Survey information will support client choices being supported
- Several staff will be recognized for making supports more invisible.

Priority 7 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

Current Status:

- We currently call our local legislators when we need their support on funding issues.

3 Year Status:

- We will have a relationship with our local legislators because of informative meetings that we hold and invite them to our community events, (such as picnics and concerts) and updates that we give them on our status.

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Action:

- We will invite legislators to dinners and community gatherings to develop a relationship to them and with our families.
- We need to hold periodic meetings with our Legislators to keep them informed on issues.

Measure:

- We will have developed a relationship with Legislators and they will be well informed about the needs of the people we serve. They will be surveyed on their knowledge of our issues.